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A
DEFENCE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH
IN
BAPTIZING INFANTS,
WITH THE
EVIDENCE
OF THEIR
RIGHT
TO A
COVENANT WITH GOD,
AND TO
BAPTISM.

Mark x. 14. *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and
forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God.*

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A DEFENCE, &c.



WE read, that when God made a Covenant with *Abraham*, that he promised to be a God to him, and to his Seed after him; and commanded that every Man-child among them, should, at eight Days old, be circumcised, and brought into Covenant with him; and that the Token of the Covenant (Circumcision) be affixed to them as a standing Testimony that *Jehovah* was their God. *The Lord said, I will make my Covenant between me and thee, and thou shalt be a Father of many Nations. I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy Seed after thee, in their Generations for an everlasting Covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee, and I will be their God. This is my Covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy Seed after thee: Every Man-child among you shall be circumcised; he that is eight Days old shall be circumcised among you, every Man-child in your Generations. The uncircumcised Man-child, whose Flesh of his Fore-skin is not circumcised, that Soul shall be cut off from his People, he hath broken my Covenant, Gen. xvii. 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14.* These Words set before us, a most glorious Promise, a Promise which includes the Tenor of the Covenant, it's inestimable

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Blessings,

Blessings, and the Interest which Abraham and his Seed were to possess in it for ever.

In order that this glorious Promise and its Accomplishment might be rendered sure, the Lord gave to *Abraham* the Sign of *Circumcision*. The Institution of this Ordinance was intended as a standing Memorial, and a visible Token of the Covenant. But when the Lord promised *Abraham*, *to be a God to him*, he included in that Covenant-promise, Abraham's Posterity. Adding, and to thy *Seed after thee in their Generations*: And that the Patriarch's *Infant-Seed* were comprehended under this Clause of the Covenant-promise, is evident, from their having been made Partakers of the confirming Seal of *Circumcision*.

Now, if it can be made to appear that the Covenant God made with *Abraham*, was the everlasting Covenant of Grace, — That it is the same which we are now under — That the Promise made to him contained the Substance of all the Gospel Promises under the New Testament Dispensation; — That Abraham and his Seed, to whom the Promises were made, comprehended all God's covenanted People to the End of the World, and that Circumcision was a Sign of the Covenant, Then, I think, it will evidently appear, that if Infants were taken into a Covenant-Relation with God under the Law, by the Sacrament of Circumcision; that this Right still irrevocably continues in that Privilege by the succeeding Ordinance of Baptism.

1. It evidently appears, that the Covenant made

made with Abraham was the Covenant of *Grace*, from the very Tenor of it — for thus runs the divine Promise — *I will be a God to thee, and to thy Seed after thee* *Jehovah* was never a G d to any Man since the Violation of the first Covenant, but through Christ, — Therefore it was the Covenant established through a Mediator, and consequently the Covenant of Grace, which God made with *Abraham*. This is still further evident from the Testimony of the Apostle, *That the Blessing of Abraham* (or the Covenant-Blessing which God gave him and his Seed) might come on the Gentiles through *Jesus Christ*, Gal. iii. 14. And when the same Apostle in another Place recites the Privileges extended to Believers under the present Dispensation, he mentions it expressly in the very same Words, which the Lord used by making the Covenant with *Abraham*, *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a People*, Heb. viii. 10. From comparing which Passages together, it is plain, that the Covenant made to Abraham and to his Seed, is also confirmed to all his gentile Children, and to their Seed from Generation to Generation.

Further, it appears, that the Covenant which we are now under is the same which was made with Abraham; from the believing Gentiles being compared to the *wild Olive-Tree*, grafted into a *good Olive Tree*; That is that the believing Gentiles are received into the same Covenant which was made with *Abraham*, the Apostle's Reasoning runs thus,

If some of the Branches be broken off, and thou being a wild Olive Tree wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakeſt of the Root and Fatneſs of the Olive Tree, Rom xi. 17. By the wild Olive Tree, we are to underſtand the Gentiles; and by the wild Olive Tree being grafted in amongst them, that is, among the Jews, we are to underſtand, of the Gentiles being received into the ſame Church and Covenant with the Jews; and by their partaking of the Root and Fatneſs of the Olive Tree, we are to underſtand, that the Gentiles on their Faith in Chriſt, are made Partakers of the Promiſes made to the Fathers, and of the ſpiritual Privileges of the Jewish Church. Hence it evidently appears, that the Covenant which we are now under is the ſame with that, which was made to *Abraham*XXXXXX

2. That the Covenant Promiſe, given to *Abraham*, contained in it the Sum and Subſtance of all the Goſpel Promiſes, from the expreſs Words of St. Paul, God preached before the Goſpel unto *Abraham*, ſaying, in thee ſhall all Nations be bleſſed, Gal. iii. 8. When God made this Promiſe, he preached the Goſpel; and he preached it with a View to us of the Gentiles on our Reception into God's Kingdom, as we are now by Faith in Chriſt; conſequently the Goſpel which is preached now to us, and which contains in it all the Promiſes we are entitled to by Faith, are the ſame in Subſtance with the Covenant made to *Abraham*: But the Promiſes made to *Abraham* included his Infant Seed, and were ſealed

sealed accordingly by Circumcision, therefore the same Promises extend to, and include, the Infant Seed of Gospel Believers; and are ratified to them by Baptism, our *Evangelical Circumcision*. For since the Promises are the same in Substance, in Signification, and in Extent, surely no solid Reason in the World can be alledged why they should not be the same in their Mode of Application by a sacramental Seal.

3. I am to prove, that Abraham's Seed, to whom as well as himself, the grand Promise was made, did comprehend all God's covenanted People, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, and Infants as well as Adults to the End of Time. But this, indeed, the Apostle has already done to my Hand in Rom. iv. 16. *To the end that the Promise might be sure to all the Seed, not to that only which is of the Law*, (not only to that Part of Abraham's Descendants which was placed under the Dispensation of the Jewish Law) "but to that (*Gentile Seed*) also" which is of the Faith of Abraham; that he "might be the Father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised," v. 11. Again, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise," Gal iii. 29. From these Passages it is evident that Gentile Believers are Abraham's Seed; as well as his immediate Descendants; that the one are Heirs of the Promise made to Abraham as well as the other; that both are Abraham's Seed, and God's covenanted People, and consequently that the

Promise which includes the Infant Seed of one, extends to the confederate Seed of the other, and that both have equally a Right to the Sign of the Covenant Relation. This Sign was administered to Abraham's Seed by Circumcision; but Baptism is that under the Gospel, which Circumcision was under the Law. Baptism therefore is a Sign of the Covenant of *Grace*, and therefore the Apostle calls it the *Circumcision of Christ*, or the Christian Circumcision.

Hence it appears, that the Abrahamic Covenant, was the Covenant of *Grace*, from the express Testimony of Scripture.—That the Promise made to Abraham contains the Substance of all the Gospel Promises given to God's covenanted People under the New Testament; and therefore included the Infant Seed of Believers under both Dispensations; that Abraham's Seed comprehended believing Jews and Gentiles, together with their Children, to the End of the World. And that *Circumcision* under the Law was a Seal of Covenant Blessings, as *Baptism* is now under the Gospel.

The Consequence then naturally deducible from hence, is, that the Right of Infant Baptism is founded upon the Covenant of *Grace*; upon the comprehensive Extent of Covenant *Promises*, and upon the common Privileges of Abraham's Seed. If then the Covenant be the same—the Promises the same—the Privileges the same—Hence it follows, that the Infant Seed of Believers have the same

same Right to be received into Covenant with God, and to Baptism, as the Infant Seed of the Jews had to a Covenant with God, and to Circumcision.

If this great Privilege was ever granted by God to Infants, which is clear, that it has been granted, Gen. xvii. 10, 12. It is a Privilege *still* subsisting, and is now in actual and full Force, if it has not been repealed: But this Covenant and Privilege has never been revoked, no such Revocation, nor any Shadow of it, appears in the whole Book of God.

Now, which of these Points can be denied? will any Man say, that this ancient Privilege has been repealed? Let the Repeal be shewn in any Part of the Gospel, and the Point will be given up. There appears no such Repeal, nor any thing like it in the whole sacred Scriptures.

On the contrary, it would be absurd to imagine, that Jesus Christ came to cut short the Privileges of the Church in any single Point, and to cast the Children of Believers out of God's Covenant, who before were taken into it.

When Christ came into the World, he did not alter the Covenant, and though he thought proper to set aside Circumcision, yet, that did not abrogate, nor in the least alter the Covenant itself; because Circumcision was no Part of the Covenant, but only a Sign of it, and a new Sign might be ordained
without

without any Alteration in the Covenant itself.

II.

I shall now set before you, how the Case stood in Relation to Infant Baptism, before, and about the Time, Christ Jesus came into the World. When Christ came into the World, Pedobaptism was so well known, usual and frequent in the Admission of Profelytes into the Jewish Church, that nothing almost was more known or frequent. It was a Custom of the Jews (as they themselves affirm) to Baptize as well as Circumcise any *Profelyte* that came over to them from other Nations. And in Case such a Person had any Infant Children then born to him, they, at their Father's Request, were in like Manner *Circumcised* and *Baptized* and admitted as *Profelytes*. And one Foundation of this, was, that they reckoned all Mankind, beside themselves, to be in an unclean State, and not capable of being entered into their Covenant without Baptism, to denote their Purification from their Uncleaness. Beside this, they were of Opinion, that *Moses*, in Numbers xv. 15. did order this: *One Ordinance shall be both for you of the Congregation, and also for the Stranger (or Profelyte) that sojourns with you, an Ordinance for ever in your Generations: as ye are, so shall the Stranger be before the Lord.*

This Custom of theirs is fully and largely set forth in the Writings of several of the most learned and eminent among the Jews.

Particularly

Particularly by *Maimonides Isuri bia*, Cap. 13. & 14.

He had been saying there, that the Israelites themselves were entered into Covenant by *Circumcision*, *Baptism* and *Sacrifice*, and then he adds, "In all Ages, when an *Ethnic* is willing to enter into the Covenant, and gather himself under the Wings of the Majesty of God, and take upon him the Yoke of the Law, he must be *Circumcised*, and *Baptized*, and bring a *Sacrifice*. As it is written, — *As ye are, so shall the Stranger be before the Lord*, Num. xv. 15. How are you? By *Circumcision*, and *Baptism*, and bringing of a *Sacrifice*. So likewise the Stranger (or *Profelyte*) through all Generations by *Circumcision*, *Baptism* and bringing of a *Sacrifice*."

The Talmud says the same Thing of receiving *Profelytes* by *Baptism*, *Talmud. Babylon. Mas. Iermeoth. Fol. 47.* When a *Profelyte* is received, he must be *Circumcised*, and then when he is cured (of the Wound of *Circumcision*) they *Baptize him* in the Presence of two wise Men, saying, *Behold he is an Israelite in all Things.*

Their Books treat of this *Baptism* as absolutely necessary, and as an Ordinance without which no one was to be accounted a *Profelyte*, *Gemara. Babylon. at Tit. Jabimoth. Cap. 4.*

He is no *Profelyte* unless he be *Circumcised*, and *Baptized*, and if he be not *Baptized* he remains a *Gentile* (or *Pagan*).

If any such *Profelyte*, who came over to
the

the Jewish Religion, and was Baptized into it, had any Infant Children then born to him, they also were, at the Father's Desire, *Circumcised* and *Baptized*, and admitted as Profelytes. The Child's Inability to declare or Promise for himself, was not look'd on as a Bar against his Reception to the Covenant: But the Desire of his Father, was sufficient to justify his Admission.

Gemara Babylon at Tit. Chetaboth, Cap. 1. Fol. 2. If with a Profelyte, his Sons and Daughters be made Profelytes, that which is done by their Father redounds to their Good.

See Ainsworth on Gen. xvii. Dr. Hammond, on Mat. iii. 19. John iii. Dr. Lightfoot, Hor. Heb. Mat. iii. and John iii.

The above Testimonies do set forth, that the Baptizing of Infants was an Ordinance so usual and well known on the Admission of Profelytes into the Jewish Church; that nothing almost was more known or frequent.

III.

We shall offer some Considerations on our Saviour's Sayings, in Regard to Infants and to Baptism, in order to know, Whether he excluded them from God's Covenant or not?

From what has been before remarked, it is evident, that Infants have a Right to be received into Covenant with God, from the express Command of God to Abraham, Gen. xvii. Let us now enquire, Whether our Saviour Christ has excluded them? In Matthew xix. 13, 14. we have an Account that
little

little Children (Infants, Luke xviii. 15.) were brought to Christ, that he should put his Hands on them, and pray over them. His Disciples rebuked them for this: But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, (Mark x. 14.) and said to them, *suffer little Children to come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of God.* And he took them up in his Arms, put his Hands upon them, and blessed them, Mark x. 16. There is not here the least Sign or Token of Christ's excluding Infants out of the Covenant; but rather a great Love and Tenderneſs ſhewn by him towards them.

From these Children being ſtiled *Infants*, and by Chriſt's taking them up in his Arms, we may underſtand that they were Children, not yet come to Age of Diſcretion. And that they were not Children brought to be healed of any bodily Diſtemper; for then the Diſciples would not have hindered them. But they were brought to him that he *ſhould bleſs them*, and *pray over them*. Which ſhews that they were capable of ſpiritual Bleſſings, and may receive Advantage by Prayers.

From the Reaſon why Chriſt would have them ſuffered to come to him, *for of ſuch is the Kingdom of Heaven*, it appears there is ſomething in little Children, why they ſhould not be hindered from coming to him, beſides their being Emblems of Humility; for this, *they are* as much, when they come not, as when they come. Now what can that be, but the Fitneſs of them to be early dedicated to the Service of God; and to enter into
Covenant

Covenant with him, by Rites appointed by him for that End.

And if of such is the Kingdom of God, if Infants are qualified for the Kingdom of God, they are certainly qualified for Baptism, which is the appointed Sign of their Reception.

Quest. Why did not Christ Baptize these Infants, or command his Disciples to do so?

Ans. Because Christian Baptism was not yet instituted. After that Jesus Christ was risen from the Dead, and all Authority in Heaven and Earth was given him, Christian Baptism was instituted, Math. xxviii. 19, 20.

2. Because the Parents of these Infants had not believed in Christ, nor had they been baptized: for they were *Jews*, and it was neither usual, nor proper, nor agreeable to the Promise, to baptize Children, before their Parents were baptized.

When our Saviour was risen from the Dead, he commissioned his Apostles to go and disciple all Nations, *baptizing* them. And Jesus spake unto them, saying, *all Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth, go ye therefore and teach (disciple) all Nations in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you,* Mat xxviii. 19, 20.

There is not here the least Mention of excluding little Children from the Covenant and from Baptism. The Command is, to disciple all Nations, baptizing them, teaching

ing them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you. What had he commanded them to teach? Was it to teach them that the Covenant and its Promises, as it was delivered to the Faithful and their Seed, was abrogated? No such Thing. What then did Christ command his Disciples to teach? To teach them to observe all Things, whatsoever I have commanded you? What had he commanded them? One Thing that Christ commanded them was, to *suffer little Children to come to him*, and to forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God, Math. xix. 14. Their Commission therefore was, to receive little Children, along with their Parents, into the Kingdom and visible Church of Christ. For if the Apostles were to teach all Things, which Christ had commanded them, then they were to teach, that Christ would have little Children be brought to him, for *of such was his Kingdom*. When Christ therefore said, *Go, and disciple all Nations*, he ought to be understood in the same Extent, which before was usually done, that is, to receive the Children with the Parents into the Covenant.

It may be observed further, that when a Commission is given in such short Words, and there is no express Direction, what they shall do with the Infants of those who become Profelytes, the most natural Interpretation is, that they must do in that Matter as they and the Church in which they lived used to do.

If a Minister was sent out to some *Heathenish Country*, and a Command given him by the *Church of England*, *Go, and convert such a Nation to the Faith, and baptize them* He would know, without asking any Question, that he must baptize the Infants of those, who, being converted, offered them to Baptism; because he knew, that to be the Meaning and Custom of the Church by which he is sent.

In like Manner, when the Apostles were sent out to the Heathen Nations, with this Commission, *Go and teach (disciple) all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. When the Case came in Hand of the Infant Children of the believing Converts, what could they think other, but that they must do with them, as had been usually done in that Church, in which they had always lived, that is, to baptize them?

If Baptism, and baptizing Infants, had been a new Thing, and unheard of, 'till John the Baptist came, as *Circumcision* was, 'till God appointed it to *Abraham*, there would have been, no doubt, as express a Command for baptizing Infants, as there was for Circumcising of them. But when the Baptizing of Infants, was a Thing commonly known and used (as was proved before) there needed not an express Command, that Infants by Name were to be baptized, when it was well known before the Gospel began, that Men, Women and Children were baptized. Suppose

pose a Proclamation should come out in these Words, *Let every one on the Lord's Day, repair to the public Assembly of the Church.* Would it be reasonable in Time to come, to maintain, that there were no *Prayers, sermons, Psalms*, uted in the public Assemblies on the Lord's Day, because there was no mention of them in the Proclamation? There was no need that Mention should be made of the particular Kinds of divine Worship there to be used, since they were both before, and at the Time of the said Proclamation, known to every Body, and in common Use. Just so, the Case is, as to Baptism, Christ ordered it to be for a Gospel Sacrament, by which all should be admitted to the Gospel Covenant, as it was formerly used to receive *Profelytes* to the *Jewish* Religion. The particular Circumstances of it, as the Manner of Baptizing, the Age, and the like, had no Need of being regulated, because they were known to the most ignorant Person by common Use. It was therefore necessary, on the other Side, that there should have been an exprefs and plain Order, that Infants and little Children should not be baptized, if our Saviour had meant, that they should not. For since it was ordinary, in all Ages before, for all the Jewish Nation to baptize Infants at the Admission of their Parents as *Profelytes*; if Christ would have that Usage to be abolished, it is reasonable to imagine, he would have expressly forbidden it. So that his and the Scripture's Silence in

this Matter, confirm and establish Infant Baptism for ever.

IV.

Let us next consider some of the Sermons and Discourses of the Apostles; whether there be any Account in them, that Infants are excluded from the Covenant?

It is written, and that in the first publick Sermon preached by any of the Apostles, after Christ's Resurrection, that Peter stood up with the Eleven, and delivered these remarkable Words, *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ; for the Promise is unto you, and to your Children. Baptism is hereby established, and the Apostle here testifieth that the Promise belongs to Children, as well as to their Parents. The Promise is unto you, and to your Children.* Peter, by preaching to the People, was proving that Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified, *was both Lord and Christ*, and that they had sinned exceedingly in crucifying him, Act. ii. 36. When they heard this, they were pricked in their Hearts, and cried out to the Apostles, *Men and Brethren, What shall we do?* Then Peter said unto them, *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost; for the Promise is unto you, and to your Children, and to all that are afar off: Even as many as the Lord our God shall call,* Act. ii. 38, 39. 'Tis worthy of Notice, that this Sermon was preached, not only

only to *Jews*, but also to *Profelytes*, or *Converts* from the *Gentiles*. To the natural Seed, and to the ingrafted Members, *Act. ii. 10.* Consequently, that the believing *Gentiles* have as good a Right in the Promise as the *Jews* have. And that it includes their little Children, as well as the little Children of the *Jews*. *The Promise is unto you, and to your Children, and to all that are afar off.* By the Stress the Apostle here lays on the Word *Promise*, we are to understand, that he uses it by way of Eminence and Distinction from other Promises. But what Promise is this, which the Apostle here names, was unto them, and to their Children? It is the Covenant-promise, which God made with *Abraham*. This he refers to and explains in his next Sermon, saying, *Ye are the Children of the Covenant, which God made with our Fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy Seed shall all the Kindreds of the Earth be blessed, Act. iii. 25.* compare *Act. ii. 39. Gal. iii. 17, 29.* What the Apostle in one Sermon calls the *Promise*, he does in the other call a *Covenant*, which God made with our Fathers, that is, with *Abraham, &c.* The Apostles in both these Places, *Act. ii. 39. and iii. 25.* gives us an Account of the Call the of *Gentiles* to the *Abrahamic Covenant*, and to its Privileges; and though they were not the natural Seed of *Abraham's* Body, yet as they were *Abraham's* covenanted Children, the Promise belongs to them and to their Children. And the Apostle preaches it thus, to encourage

them to repent and to be baptized. Since Children have as good a Right to the Covenant as their Parents have, they have as good a Right to be baptized as their Parents have. Can it be judged from this first Sermon of the Apostles, that they had Authority to exclude Infants? They do evidently include them along with their Parents in the Promise. And is the including them, the Mode of excluding them?

The Apostle Paul asserts that Baptism is a Rite of Initiation to Christians, as Circumcision was to the Jews, when he says, *That in Christ we are circumcised with the Circumcision made without Hands, and consisting in the putting off of the Body of Sin, in the Circumcision of Christ, being buried with him in Baptism,* Col. ii. 11, 12. By the Circumcision made without Hands, and by the Circumcision of Christ, here, we are to understand the Circumcision which Christ has appointed; which is *Baptism*. And this he explains in the following Words, *Being buried with him in Baptism.* What the Apostle here asserts, is, That Baptism is ordained in the Room of Circumcision. And since it is so, we may from hence infer, That Baptism is Christ's Ordinance for the Admission of Infants of believing Parents into a Covenant with God, as Circumcision was of old for the Admission of the Infants of the Jews. For if it had been otherwise, there would have been a great vacuum in Christianity. If the Infants under Christianity had no Right or Sign whereby

whereby they might be received into Covenant with God, the Jews might have pleaded a Pre'eminence above the Christian, and their Objection of the Necessity of Circumcision as to them, would be still in Force respecting Infants; they entering into Covenant by no other Rite, and so remaining Strangers from the Church, the Covenant, and Promises, as the Gentiles were; which sure the Jews would have objected to the Reproach of Christianity, if truly they could have done it.

Further the Apostle Paul asserts, (in a Case where the covenanted Right of Infants might be doubtful) that the Children are holy, where one of the Parents only was a Christian, that is, that they are born to a Right of being admitted as Members of the Christian Church and therefore qualified for Baptism. The Case was this, when either the Husband or the Wife was an *Heathen*, and the other a Christian, the Christian might be unwilling to cohabit with the Heathen, through an Apprehension that such Cohabitation might be prejudicial to the covenanted Right, or Christian Privileges of their Offspring. The Apostle answers, by saying, that he need not be scrupulous on that Account, for the unbelieving Husband is *sanctified*, or to be considered as a Christian with respect to his Issue by the Wife; And this unbelieving Wife in like Manner is sanctified by the Husband. Else were your Children unclean, (or in the state of Pagans) and Strangers to God's Covenant,

nant, *but now are they holy.* Being born to a Right of being received as Members of the Christian Church. 1 Cor. vii. 14. *The unbelieving Husband is sanctified by the Wife, and the unbelieving Wife is sanctified by the Husband, else were your Children unclean, but now they are holy.* The Apostle does not say, *Else were your Children Bastards,* but now they are *Legitimate*, but else were they unclean; *i. e.* Heathen Children, not to be owned as an Holy Seed. And therefore, not to be admitted into Covenant with God, as belonging to his holy People.

We may therefore argue after this Manner: If the holy Seed among the Jews, was therefore to be circumcised, and thereby be brought into Covenant with God; because they were born in Sanctity, (*for the Root being holy, so are the Branches also*), Then by like Reason, the holy Seed of Christians ought to be admitted to Baptism, and be made Members of the Christian Church, as they also are born Holy. Agreeable hereto, we read, that the Apostles baptised whole Families. St. Paul, *baptised Lydia, and her Household,* Act. xvi 14, 15. *The Goaler and all that were his,* Act. xvi 32, 33. And says, that he *also baptised the Household of Stephanas,* 1 Cor. i. 16. Now, it is very likely, that there were some Infants and little Children in some of these Families, and 'tis uncommonly strange, if there were not.

V.

I shall enquire, what was the Custom of the Christian Church, and what is the Account which the primitive Christians give, with Respect to the Baptising of Infants after the Time of the Apostles. The Persons who lived in the Age next succeeding the Apostles, were undoubtedly most likely to know the Mind of Christ and his Apostles best; and if the Account which they give, do testify that their Practice was to baptize Infants, then it is certain, that it was the Will of Christ and his Apostles, that they should be baptized.

Irenæus, an eminent and venerable Man in the Primitive Church, speaking of Christ, says "He came to save all Persons by himself, *All*, I mean, who by him "are regenerated (or Baptized) unto God, *Infants*, and little ones, and Children; and "elder Persons. Therefore he went through the several Ages, for Infants being "made an Infant, sanctifying Infants" This holy Man was born four Years before St. John died. It was therefore impossible he could be a Stranger to the Apostolical Custom respecting Baptism.

Justin Martyr, another eminent Father, and who lived within 40 Years of the Apostles, in his second Apology for the Christians to *Antoninus Pius*, has these Words, "They are *regenerated* by the same Way of *Regeneration*, by which we were *regenerated*, for they are washed with Water, in the Name of God the Father and Lord of all Things, and
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of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit."

Origen, another learned Man in the Primitive Church, who lived within a Hundred and Ten Years after the Apostles, in his Comment on the Epistle to the Romans; after observing, That it is commanded in the Law, that a Sacrifice should be offered for every Child that is born, concludes his Observations, by saying, "For this Reason it was, that the Church had from the Apostles a Tradition (or Order) to give Baptism even to Infants."

The next Witness I shall name is *St. Cyprian*. This holy Man was Bishop of *Cartbage*, and lived 150 Years after the Apostles. He gives an Account, "That one *Fidus*, a Country Bishop sent a Letter to *Cyprian*, requesting his Opinion upon Two particular Points, one of which was, whether an Infant might be Baptized before the 8th Day? No less than 66 neighbouring Bishops happened to sit in Council with *Cyprian*, at the Time that *Fidus's* Letter arrived; its Contents were therefore laid before this Synod, and their unanimous Opinion was transmitted to *Fidus*, in a Letter, which bare the following Title.

"*Cyprian*, and the rest of the Bishops which were present at the Council, 66 in Number, To *Fidus* our Brother send Greeting:

"As to the Case of *Infants*, whereas you judge they are not to be Baptized within 2 or

3 Days after they were born, &c. we were all of a contrary Opinion, and judge that the Grace and Mercy of God are not to be denied to any Person that is born. For God, as he accepts no one's Person, so not their *Age*. We judge that no Person is to be hindered from attaining the Grace (of Baptism) by the Law (of Gospel Liberty) that is now appointed, and that the spiritual Circumcision ought not to be restrained by the Circumcision that was according to the Flesh; but that all are to be admitted to the *Grace of Christ*. It is not for us to hinder any Person from Baptism and the Grace of God, which Rule as it holds for all, so we think it more especially to be observed in reference to Infants and Persons newly born." This is a plain Proof that all, at that Time, were of Opinion that Infants ought to be baptized; since both *Fidus*, who puts the Question, and the Council that resolved it, do shew by their Words, their Sense, and Opinion to be, that Infants ought to be baptized.

Gregory Nazianzen, another eminent Man in the Primitive Church, in his Oration about Baptism, speaketh thus: "What say you to those that are as yet Infants, and are not in a Capacity to be sensible, either of the Grace (of Baptism) or of the Want of it? shall we baptize them too? Yes, by all Means; for it is better that they be *sanctified* without their own Sense of it, than that they should die unsealed and uninitiated"

St. Austin, another eminent Man in the
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Primitive Church, in his 4th Book against the *Donatists*, respecting Baptism, testifies thus: After mentioning that the whole Body of the Church held Infant Baptism. "It any one do ask for Divine Authority in this Matter, though that which the whole Church practises, and which has not been instituted by Councils; but was ever in Use, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a Thing delivered (or ordered) by Authority of the Apostles" Though St. *Austin* speaks of Infant-Baptism in this Place, but by the by, his Words are, we see a full Evidence that it was then universally practised, and had been so beyond the Memory of any Man, or of any Record; That they took it to be a Thing that had not been enacted by any Council, but had ever been in Use from the Beginning of Christianity

In another Place and on another Occasion, he concludes his Reasoning thus: "The Custom of our Mother the Church in Baptizing Infants ought not to be disregarded, nor be esteemed superfluous, nor be thought to be any other than an Apostolick Tradition."

About 400 Years after our Saviour, there arose a great Controversy in the Church, between Two eminent Men; that is, between the aforementioned St. *Austin*, and *Pelagius*. The Dispute was about *Original Sin*. St. *Austin* maintained Original Sin, and *Pelagius* denied it. The Occasion, why I take Notice of this is, that both the Parties, St. *Austin* and his Followers, and *Pelagius* and his Followers, both

both of them confessed and maintained Infant Baptism.

St. *Austin* in his third Book against the Pelagians, testifies thus; " Since they (the Pelagians) grant that Infants must be Baptized, as not being able to oppose the Authority of the whole Church, which was doubtless delivered by our Lord and his Apostles." And again, " for my Part I do not remember that I ever heard any Thing from any Christians that received the Old and new Testament, neither from such as were of the Catholick Church, nor from such as belong to any Sect or Schism." The Testimony of St. *Austin* in this Matter, must needs be looked on as a very considerable Evidence. He declares, that he never met with any Christian, either Churchman or Sectary, nor with any Writer that owned the Scripture, who taught any other Doctrine, but that Infants are Baptized for the *Pardon of Sin*, much less then had he known, or heard of any, that denied that they are to be baptized at all."

As for *Pelagius* he also maintained Infant Baptism. In the Creed or Confession of Faith which he has set forth, he acknowledges thus: " we hold *one Baptism*, which we say ought to be administered with the same sacramental Words to *Infants* as it is to elder Persons."

On another Occasion he declares thus: " Men slander me, as if I denied the Sacrament of Baptism to Infants, or did promise the Kingdom of Heaven to some Persons,

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without the Redemption of Christ, which is a Thing that I never heard, no, not even any wicked Heretick say."

This Controversy about Original Sin, drew from the contending Parties such Concessions, which does not only prove, and clearly testify, that it was the Custom and Practice of the Church from the Apostles Days to baptize Infants, but also that this Ordinance was thereby established an uncontroverted Point for six successive Centuries, from the Time of St. *Austin*; and this a learned Man of the Antipedobaptist's Persuasion (Mr. Tombs) himself acknowledges: " The Authority of *Austin* was it, which carried the Baptism of Infants in the following Ages almost (he should have said altogether) without Controul."

I might add to these the Testimony of several other venerable and learned Men amongst the *primitive Christians*; but the Testimonies of those which I have named are sufficient to prove, that all, in every Nation where Christianity was professed, in the first Ages after the Apostles, did baptize Infants. And their doing so, is an undoubted Proof, that it was the Will and Intention of Christ and his Apostles, that the Infants of believing Parents should be admitted into Covenant with God, by Baptism.

Obj. Where, in Scripture, is there a Command for baptizing Infants?

Ans. On the one Hand, where the Reason of the Thing, and the Bent of the Scriptures join,

join, there is no need of an express Command. Is there any positive Injunction to be found throughout the whole New Testament for the Observation of the first Day of the Week as a Sabbath Day? yet, who doubts whether that is our Christian Sabbath? where is it expressly commanded, that Women should receive the Lord's Supper? Yet, who disputes their Right to that Sacrament? On the other Hand, Since the Infants of believing Parents have a Right to the original Covenant made to Abraham, which is the same with the Covenant of Grace, by the express Command of God himself; If Christ had not been desirous that the Right of Infants to Baptism should continue, he would have commanded it to be laid aside, and to exclude them from Baptism, rather than give a Command to baptize them. The proper Demand therefore is, not, where are they, in the new Testament said to be admitted, but where are they in the new Testament, said to be excluded? For if they in the new Testament be no where excluded, it is certain they are admitted. The proper Question therefore is, *when were Infants cast out of the Covenant of Grace?* And supposing the new Testament to be entirely silent, the true Answer for that very Reason is *Never*; they never were excluded, never can be excluded, as that original Covenant never was, nor ever will be abrogated. Had the Lord revoked the Covenant Interest of Infants, is it possible the Scripture should never mention it? Is it possible

possible no Apostle should discover it? Is it possible that the Jews, who had been in Possession of it for the Space of 2000 Years should never object or remonstrate against the Gospel on this Account? They were heinously offended, at laying down the Use of the old Seal of the Covenant, *Circumcision*, in the Case of all the Gentile Converts; and would they not have been much more disgusted, and would they not have had a juster Foundation to exclaim against the Gospel, if it had uncovenanted their own Children? Had Children been cut off from their ancient Right, surely it would have been one of the greatest Questions in the Apostles Days, and would have been as clearly decided as the Question about *Circumcision*, Act. xv. And yet we never find the least Word of an Objection on this Head. The believing Jews never once scruple it, the unbelieving Jews never charge it upon the Gospel. The famous Council, Acts xv. take no Manner of Notice of it. And what can the Meaning of all this Silence be? The Meaning is evident; because the Thing, especially where both Parents were Christians, was never denied or doubted; but was allowed and acknowledged on all Hands. In short, the Right of Infants to the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace, is solidly proved from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And the true Question is, when were they struck out of the Covenant? When were their Right and Privileges revoked? when was the great Charter of Heaven

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(delivered and sealed to Abraham) altered or rescinded in this Respect? And the true Answer is, *Never*, nor ever can be.

Object. Faith and Repentance are required of those that under the new Testament are taken into the Gospel Covenant; now as Infants can neither believe nor repent they cannot be taken into it.

Ans. This Objection would be valid, if we affirmed that Infants might be the first in a Family to whom the Grant or Promise is made; but in this Case, Infants cannot be the first in a Family that have a Covenant Right. For if we Christians are *Heirs according to the Promises*, (Gal. iii. 29.) made to *Abraham*, as the Apostle assures us we are, then we and our Seed must inherit the Promise by the same Rule, and by the same Order, as Abraham and his Seed; by which Rule and Order Parents, who believe, must be first in the Covenant, and the Children's Right must result from the Right of such Parents. *Abraham believed God*; and God made a Promise to him, and his Seed after him: And so his Infant Seed in every rising Generation were circumcised, in Token of their inheriting the Promise from him. Agreeable to this Rule and Order, during the Mosaic Dispensation, every Profelyte from among the Heathen must profess Faith in the true God, before he could be circumcised. But when the first in the Family was so taken into the Covenant, his Infant Seed in following Generations were circumcised in Token of their Right derived

derived from their Parents, and from *Abraham*. So also by the same Rule and Order, when the Apostles preached the Gospel among the Gentiles, all the first Converts must believe, before they could be taken into the Christian Covenant. And it is of these first Converts alone, the first in a Family who embraced the Gospel, of whom the Scripture speaks, when it makes Faith and Repentance necessary to their Right and Admittance into the Church and Covenant. And with respect to the Infants of such believing Parents, their Right or Claim results and devolves to them immediately from the Right of their Parents, according to the known Rule and Order of the Promise.

Let us now turn our Eyes, and ask, where is the Precept? where is there *one* single Instance in the whole Scripture of the Baptism practised among those of a different Opinion? Is there any where an Account of Believers bringing up their Children to Years of Maturity before they were baptized? For the Baptism of adult Persons, born of Christian Parents, upon their Profession of Faith and Repentance, there is neither Precept nor Precedent in Scripture, nor, which is still worse, is there any Principle from Genesis to the Revelations, which in the least favours or encourages it; so that had we less Scripture Authority for Infant Baptism than we have, we should have more then they for their adult Baptism; for they have none at all.



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